

# U.S. SENATOR BEN CARDIN



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Dear Friends,

My heart broke when I learned that, as of this week, more than 100,000 Americans have died as a result of COVID-19. To put this incomprehensible number in perspective, in four months we have lost more Americans than were killed in the Korean and Vietnam Wars combined. Four months > two wars!

I grieve for all of the men, women, and children who were taken before their time by this terrible pandemic, and send my warmest thoughts and prayers to their loved ones.

What is perhaps most tragic is that this death toll could have been significantly lower had we acted sooner to address the COVID-19 outbreak. One study by [Columbia University](#) found that, if the U.S. had instituted broad social distancing measures just one week earlier, we could have prevented roughly 36,000 deaths.

We'll never be able to bring back the wonderful souls we have lost. But what we can and must do is take every precaution to avoid any further unnecessary loss of life. Especially now, as many states like Maryland begin to lift shelter-in-place orders, it is crucial that we all adhere to the safety measures recommended by public health experts in order to protect our communities. Those include keeping our distance from one another, washing our hands often, avoiding touching our faces, and of course: wearing a face covering in public, particularly in indoor spaces and when close proximity to others is unavoidable.

***To prevent unintentional and asymptomatic spread, please, show respect for your family, friends and our community by wearing a mask or face covering when in public or near others.***

Although there is much we don't yet understand about this novel coronavirus, we do know that a large portion of those with the virus are asymptomatic, meaning that they don't show any symptoms. These individuals can spread the virus to others through respiratory droplets that travel through the air when they talk, sneeze, or cough. In other words, you may have no idea that you are infected with the coronavirus and end up giving it to a friend, relative, or neighbor without knowing it. And even though you haven't experienced any negative symptoms, the person you unknowingly infect may be elderly or suffer from preexisting conditions that make the virus extremely dangerous to them. In addition, people in their 40s and 50s with COVID-19 are dying from strokes and young children are being struck down with a mysterious multisystem inflammatory syndrome. Assuming someone is "safe" because of their age, race or previous health can be dangerously misleading.

This is where cloth face coverings, or masks, come in. By wearing a mask when we go to the grocery store or the pharmacy, we lower the risk of inadvertently spreading the coronavirus to the people around us. Anyone could be at risk. Wearing a mask is not a political statement but a selfless act of respect and kindness towards those around you. And we all benefit when we help to substantially slow the spread of COVID-19.

***Until we have a vaccine, wearing a mask is one of our best defenses to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Please, show respect for your family, friends and our community by wearing a mask or face covering when in public or near others.***

In our society, the majority of us follow a common code of decency that we accept even though it imposes some restrictions, because it makes life safer for everyone. We willingly wait our turn at the grocery store for the next available cashier rather than barge in front of fellow shoppers. We accept basic dress codes at restaurants and stores. It is a minor inconvenience to wear face coverings in public spaces in order to reduce the harm of a deadly virus. In the midst of this pandemic, it is how we show respect to our neighbors and family. This is how we act as responsible, considerate citizens. This simple act is how we save lives.

COVID-19 does not pay any attention to political parties and partisanship should never color our efforts to safeguard public health. Not wearing a mask in public does not make you a tough guy or prove your party loyalty. It is selfish and suggests that the only person you care about is yourself.

We can do better and most of us do every day.

***I am asking you to please repeat this phrase and practice it daily: Show respect for your family, friends and our community by wearing a mask or face covering when in public or near others.***

We will get through this crisis together, but we will get through it much faster and with far fewer casualties if we act like people's lives depend on our choices – because they do.

Thank you for caring about our community.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ben". The letter "B" is large and stylized, with the "e" and "n" following in a cursive-like script.

Ben